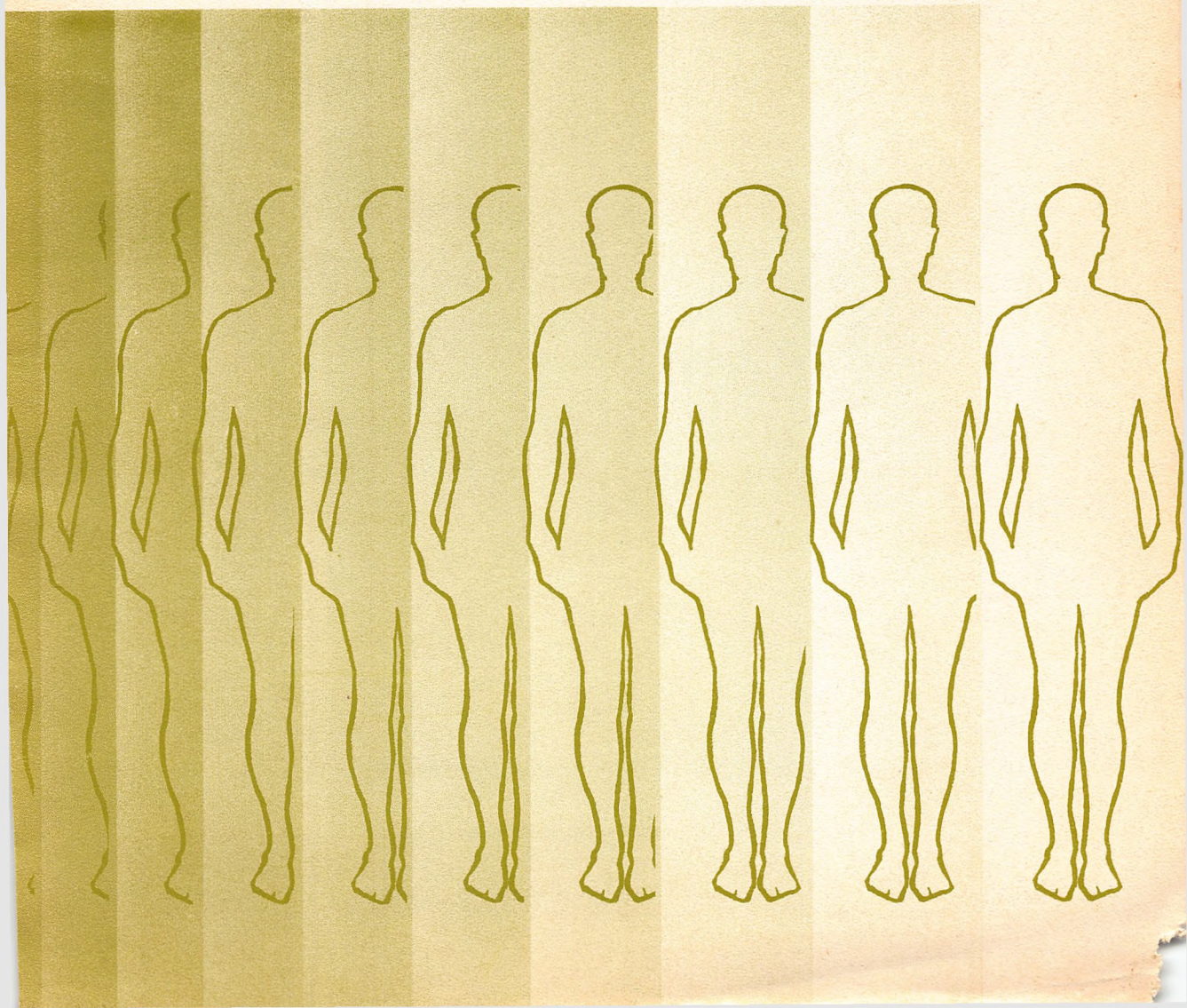


TEN STEPS TO SELF- FULFILLMENT

By Robert G. Chaney

STEP 7

Conquer Cause and Effect





Illustrations by Teodors Liliensteins

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TEN STEPS TO SELF-FULFILLMENT

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STEP 7

THE THIRD MYSTICAL LAW:

Conquer Cause and Effect

The Law of Karma

In a mystical, spiritual sense, wealth isn't measured in terms of dollars and cents, for these are impermanent qualities. Nor in terms of knowledge, for even knowledge changes with the passing years.

Whatever enriches life and provides true wealth must be permanent and unchanging, which means that *wisdom* and *understanding* are the only equivalents of true wealth. These two qualities may be found in abundance in one place, and that is the Self.

The Gospel of Thomas reports Jesus as saying:
...but if you do not know yourselves, then you are in poverty and you are poverty.

Quite possibly this is the greatest amount of excellent advice in the fewest number of words you will ever read. And one of the most important facets of understanding and knowledge, contributing to knowing your Self, is to be found in the law of karma, stated both scientifically and esoterically as *the law of cause and effect*. It is in this law that science and mysticism find their hands most firmly clasped, find their common basis.

Life would be a farce without the law of karma, the law which states that for every effect there is a cause, for every action there is a reaction. If it were not so, all would be chaos. Nothing could be truly known. Nothing could be accomplished. If the nail did not yield to the hammer, if electricity did not spring from the dynamo, if life did not respond to sun

and rain, an ordered and organized world would be eclipsed in a moment. Final catastrophe would be the order of the day.

Just what is karma?

Karma is the inevitable result in the future of an act in the present.

By understanding this law you learn not to put your hand in the fire or cross the street in front of traffic. By it you learn "there is a time to speak and a time to remain silent." By it you guard your health and improve your Self on every level.

The workings of karma are not always obvious, but are always present. "What have I done to deserve this?" is a question for which all too often no answer is readily observable in the drama of our everyday lives. Yet we must admit that nothing happens without a cause. There are no causeless occurrences.

Karma tells us there is a reason for the puzzles we encounter in life, though we may not always recognize it. It explains inequalities of birth and success, applies the healing balm to the wounds of life, administers justice impartially to all with favor to none. If we use it properly, it helps us change our cycles to spirals, helps us to combine the chemicals of life into new and more favorable solutions and to constellate happier circumstances.

Whatever situations prevail in your life at this moment are the result of the law of karma. They are the effects of past causes. Understanding this can either depress or inspire you. It will depress you if you believe that you have no control over and cannot change the future. But common sense tells us that you do control and change the future almost every moment of your life. It will inspire you if you will engrave upon your consciousness the fact that tomorrow is today objectified, that you create a new tomorrow by what you think and do today.

As a great teacher has expressed it: *As you sow, so shall you reap.*

The implications of this statement, and the promise it holds for you, go far beyond moral and ethical issues. It holds for you the inspiring thought that the trend of unfavorable karma can be changed, its flow reversed, and favorable karma can be created beginning

"As you sow,



so shall you reap."

this very moment.

We are all too often like the legendary character in Washington Irving's story of Ichabod Crane and the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. He "rode off in all directions." When we scatter our efforts instead of concentrating upon definite objectives, we ride off in all directions, setting causes against causes. And then, to our dismay, effects cancel effects.

As James wrote in his Epistle: *A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways*. It takes time to learn the lesson of the laser (see Step 4, page 20) and discover what concentrated effort in one direction will accomplish. But to help us learn the lesson we can investigate your precise relation to karma, or cause and effect.

THE LAW OF ACTION AND REACTION

Let us imagine that near the center of your dining table there are two baseballs lying motionless a few inches apart. With a movement of your hand you roll one ball toward the other. As it strikes the second ball, the energy and movement of the first are transmitted to it. The first ball stops, but the second ball, reacting to the blow, rolls on to the edge of the table.

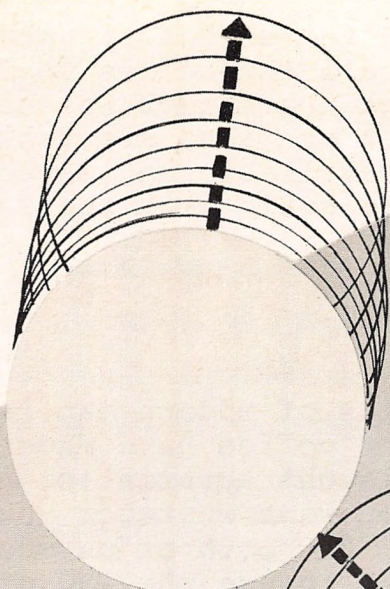
This very simple example illustrates what happens as a result of your thoughts and acts in life. It demonstrates action and reaction, cause and effect. We might say that:

You = action.

Karma = reaction.

Suppose it were possible to eliminate the entire record of past karma from your life and you began at this moment to create entirely new causes, or karma, affecting the future. Because of your present state of knowledge, the future would be bright indeed, wouldn't it?

But it is impossible to do this, so there are bound to be problems in the future as a result of causes put into motion in the past. However, you can modify the effects which become objectified in the future by changing your thoughts and acts today, and this is one of the greatest lessons that knowledge of the law of karma offers you.



KARMA = *Reaction*

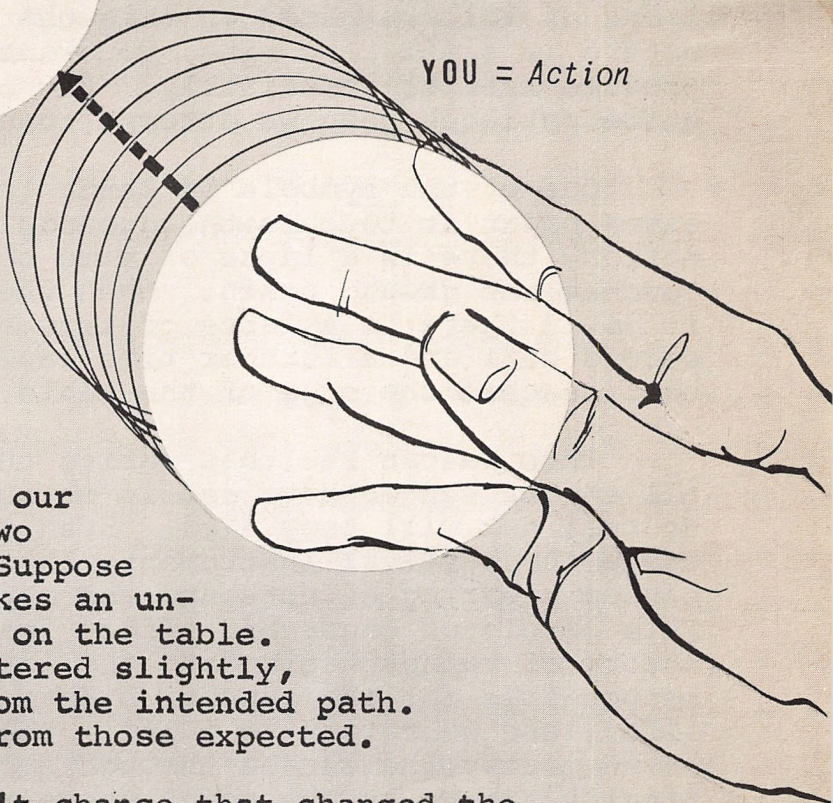
Even so, what part does chance play in the situations present in your life?

HOW DOES CHANCE AFFECT KARMA?

Let us return to our illustration of the two balls on the table. Suppose one of the balls strikes an unnoticed grain of sand on the table. Its course will be altered slightly, and it will swerve from the intended path. Results will differ from those expected.

Actually it wasn't chance that changed the course of the ball. It was cause and effect. The law still holds. *Chance is simply karma resulting from an unexpected or unknown cause.*

The effects of unknown and unexpected causes necessarily will be present in your life, sometimes favorable and sometimes not. And there are two ways to negate the unfavorable aspects. The first is to use logic and intuition to eliminate these secondary causes. In other words, make certain the table is cleared of all possible impediments to the free-rolling ball before you roll it. Intuition, which has been discussed in Steps 1 and 2, and in a special lesson I've written titled *Intuition, the Sense of Inner Perception*, is often more effective than logic.



YOU = *Action*

The second way to negate the effect of unknown and unexpected causes (which we call chance) is to learn the lesson it has taught after the effect has been observed. Certainly this way is the less desirable, but sometimes is the only course available and is better than doing the same thing over again with the same undesirable or unexpected result.

TIME AND KARMA

One of the characteristics of modern man is impatience. The makers of instant coffee have made millions of dollars based on this characteristic. If your nature is similar to mine, you want whatever you do to produce results immediately. But both of us must acquire patience when we attempt to use the law of karma.

One of the symbols of karma is the wheel. At a given point it touches the ground. When it is set in motion, there is a lapse of time before that same point touches the ground again. When the ball on the table is moved there is a lapse of time before it strikes the second ball and a further time lapse before the second ball reaches the edge of the table.

Thus we can see that during the span of a lifetime all the causes we have set in motion have not run their course, nor will they ever. Even at death, when we put aside the physical instrument, there are still many causes creating effects and thereby still further causes. This circle of cause and effect leads many to accept the theory of reincarnation and the idea that we are still responsible for the causes we have created in a past life...and we return to fulfill those responsibilities. As we modify the causes through succeeding lives, we finally arrive at the point where all the causes are beneficent and we are no longer bound by them. According to the reincarnation theory, we are then free from the "wheel of necessity" and we progress to the spirals of opportunity...re-embodiment only if we wish to do so.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE KARMA

Does life go from misfortune to misfortune? Does one unfortunate effect in turn become the cause of still another? If the spiral seems to tend downward, is it impossible to reverse its course?

You are a rare person if there is no unfortunate or unfavorable circumstance in your life. Such a cir-

cumstance can be changed and you need only read again the brief section of this lesson about how chance affects karma to learn the way to do it.

Let us remember that we reap the karma of our wisdom as well as that of our misjudgment.

When I was a little boy I loved to play baseball. One day while running the bases I tripped, fell and broke my arm. The doctor applied a cast, and there was no more baseball that spring.

Then came the wonderful day when the cast was removed. The very next day, while playing with our dog, I tripped over the roots of a tree and broke my arm again in exactly the same place.

The fact that I broke my arm twice did not indicate that I was morally a bad boy, but it did prove that I was reckless, careless.

The good but careless man reaps the karma of both qualities. He is rewarded for being good, and "rewarded" for being careless -- or even ignorant. Ignorance of the law doesn't excuse one from its effect.

Thus we discover that the law of cause and effect operates in relation to three outer aspects of our lives:

1. the thought,
2. the intent behind the thought,
3. the nature of the act which results from the thought.

We are therefore led to consider to what extent it is possible for us to change into a more favorable pattern the karmicly created situations in our lives, and to what extent we can improve the future.

YOU ARE A TRANSFORMER OF DIVINE ENERGY

In the electronic, simulated pipe organ I've built in our home there are several electrical apparatuses known as transformers. They receive the current from the power line and change it to different forms of power.

When certain switches are activated, they cause

the electrical energy to create purely mechanical movements of certain parts. When other switches are activated the transformers change electrical energy to the sounds of flutes, violins, brass horns, etc., and to the notes of the scale. It can sound the deepest bass horn or the highest piccolo. It all comes from the one original electric power.

In life, you are a transformer which does precisely the same thing. You transform life energy into many physical, mechanical movements. You also transform it into many expressions of emotion, thought and spiritual aspiration.

In the organ, the transformer is the modifying factor. In life, you are the modifying factor.

In the organ the transformer adjusts the effects. In life you adjust the effects. You activate karma, for karma is simply the adjustment of effects according to the causes you have activated.

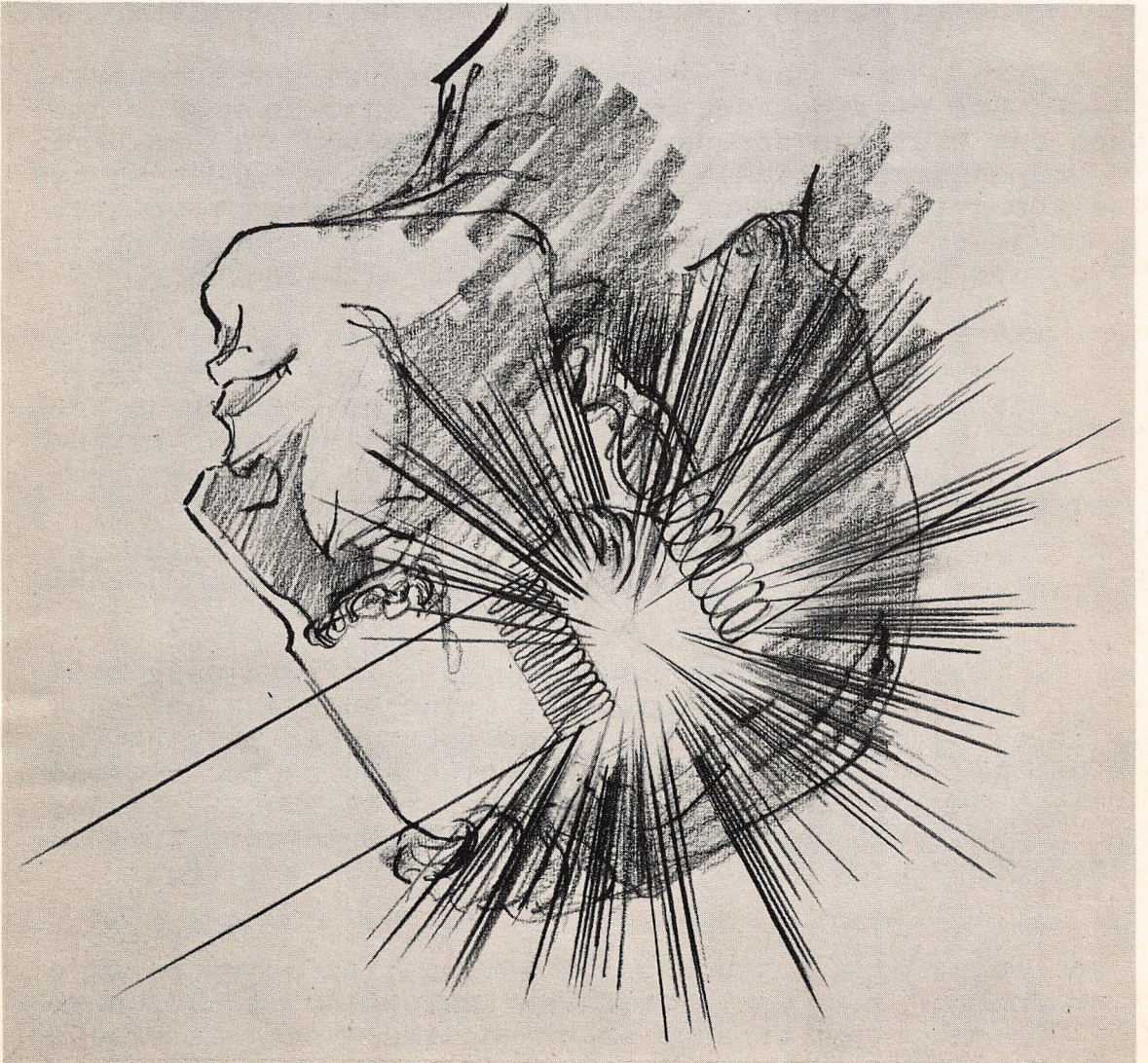
There is this difference. The flick of the switch on the organ stops the flow of power and the organ falls silent. But you are "on" twenty-four hours a day. Modifying the One Great Power never ceases where you are concerned.

Inherent in you, as a transformer of the One Great Power, is the freedom to choose the way in which that Power will be modified. Can you really change the cycles into spirals?

YOUR FREE WILL AND YOUR KARMA

Do you really possess the privilege of free will? There are some very learned people who doubt it. They reason that you are impelled into the thoughts and acts of your life by forces over which you have no control, like a person sitting in the back seat of a driverless car who must start and stop, turn right or left, subject only to the influences to which the car itself reacts.

Yet you influenced the future when you rolled one ball against the other. The future course of the balls was determined by factors which you deliberately selected: the speed and force you imparted to the first ball, its direction, the "spin" you imparted to it. So it is readily seen that you do have freedom of choice in many matters. You do possess free will, and the



Inherent in you, as a transformer of the One Great Power, is the freedom to choose the way in which that Power will be modified.

choices you make in everyday life as the result of exercising that free will are the determining factors which influence your future. You can see that a "dust particle" is in the path of the second ball, to swerve it in another direction, thus altering the effect of the first cause.

You are free to change your karma at any time, not always in the twinkling of an eye, to be sure. But you are constantly determining the factors which alter the flow of life forces governing every situation and relationship in which you are involved. You exercise free will in determining what you believe to be right

or wrong, what should receive more attention and emphasis or less, what should be done or not done, to give only a few general examples. And every choice is a cause which will have a corresponding effect in your life.

Thus life becomes a combination of past karma plus present modifying choices, which in turn create the future. There is a "magnetic continuum" between past, present and future which cannot be broken, but it can be modified or changed and, whether you realize it or not, you are constantly doing this by the exercise of your free will.

THE FLOW OF KARMA IN YOUR LIFE

The better to picture the functioning of karma in your life, let us imagine a stream without beginning or ending that flows in a circle past a point at which you are standing. Our imaginary stream is of the purest clear water, and in our allegory it represents the cosmic forces of life in you.

Into the stream you deposit a quantity of red coloring matter. It mingles with and tints the water so that as it flows past you again, in its circular course, it is tinged with red. This represents the introduction of your personal thoughts and actions into the cosmic stream of life energy, which has modified your environment and the affairs of your life.

Not satisfied with environment and conditions, you next introduce another color to the stream -- representing a different pattern of thoughts and acts. The second color mingles with the waters and its previous coloring and further modifies them. As the second color makes its round the nature of the stream is further changed.

In your actual relationship to life this process is repeated over and over again. Each time your emotions, thoughts and acts are expressed you introduce either more of the same or an entirely new color to the never-ending stream of life forces. And that stream is always changing the situations of your life.

Exactly what is the coloring matter, and what are the results of the change in the stream?

As yet, in our present state of evolvment, we cannot see them all clearly, but here are a few exam-

ples which will give you an indication of their nature.

The coloring matter of helpful or harmful actions creates the karma of beneficent or malign environment.

Desires and aspirations cause the stream to offer new opportunities and increased capacities.

Sustained and repeated thoughts result in the color of character.

Enthusiasm contributes to the hues of success.

Attunement to the higher life clears the waters of sediments of the lower.

The point at which you deposit coloring in the stream of life forces is the present. As soon as it passes it is the past, yet it becomes the future as it returns to you. Thus the "magnetic continuum" of past, present and future are all part of the same stream.

But how is this "magnetic continuum" between past, present and future sustained?

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE SEED ATOMS

Those who have delved deeply into the principles of man's eternal life tell us that you possess three permanent magnetic cores known as *seed atoms*. Electronically incorporated into one of these atoms are the magnetic characteristics of your physical nature, in a second are the characteristics of your emotional nature, and in the third are the characteristics of your mental nature.

These magnetic cores are carried with you throughout life and remain with you even after death. Each of them electronically records and expresses the constantly changing qualities with which you impregnate them. Thus, the mental seed atom, for instance, is always a record of your present mental nature, reflecting the quality and intensity of your thought processes.

To continue with the mental seed atom as an example, your thought processes in the past have been engraved within its electronic substance and are carried into the present -- the magnetic continuum between past and present. As your intense thoughts continue, you either reinforce, modify or completely change the electronic nature of the seed atom and thus form the mag-

netic continuum with the future.

The mental seed atom thus becomes the repository of your mental karma. It is the sperm and ovum from which are born the profuse offspring that constitute your complete mental nature which, in its entirety, contains all the characteristics of its parents, the original mental seed atom, and its creator, your Self.

This brief description of the seed atoms and their functions is far from complete. The subject is treated in full detail in Astara's Degree Lessons. The point here is that the seed atoms form the magnetic continuum between past, present and future, and magnetically carry the "seeds" of karma from one element of time to the next. Being of magnetic quality, and of intensely concentrated force, the effects of the mental and emotional seed atoms exert an influence far beyond the personality in which they reside. Your mental seed atom causes magnetic influences in your life that affect your association with others and the many circumstances in which you are involved.

So we can follow the journey and the karmic implications of what you think and do:

1. from your thoughts and acts to the seed atoms, then
2. from the seed atoms through your composite nature to
3. the relationships and circumstances of your life.

We may then conclude that however remote from your specific influence and desire a specific situation seems to be, it is the karmic result, or the effect, of causes you have set in motion.

This concept, however, still leaves us with a puzzle. Did I cause the unfortunate circumstance that seems to have occurred without any thought or act on my part? We cannot always know the answer clearly, but later in the lesson we will deal with it directly and arrive at some measure of understanding about it.

In the meantime, we can arrive at a conclusion which embodies one of the greatest lessons that karma presents to us. It is impossible to live actively in any segment of time except the eternal now. We cannot return to the past and "live life over again." Nor can

we skip the present which always exists. Therefore the conclusion, and karma's great lesson, is: *Instead of worrying about the future, think and do the thing that is right and important now.*

As it was stated in the Sermon on the Mount: *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.* This is a capsule statement which says that if you would alter the effects of the past and improve the course of the future, you need only think and act in the present in a manner consistent with your best ideals and understanding.

Never, under any circumstances, fall into the folly of thinking that you can set a cause in motion without a resulting effect. The coalescence of circumstances, which we discussed in Step 5, is as certain as the law of gravity. Cause and effect follow one another as the night follows the day and the day the night.

But is karma a purely personal matter, or does it apply to larger groups and is it enacted on a broader scale?

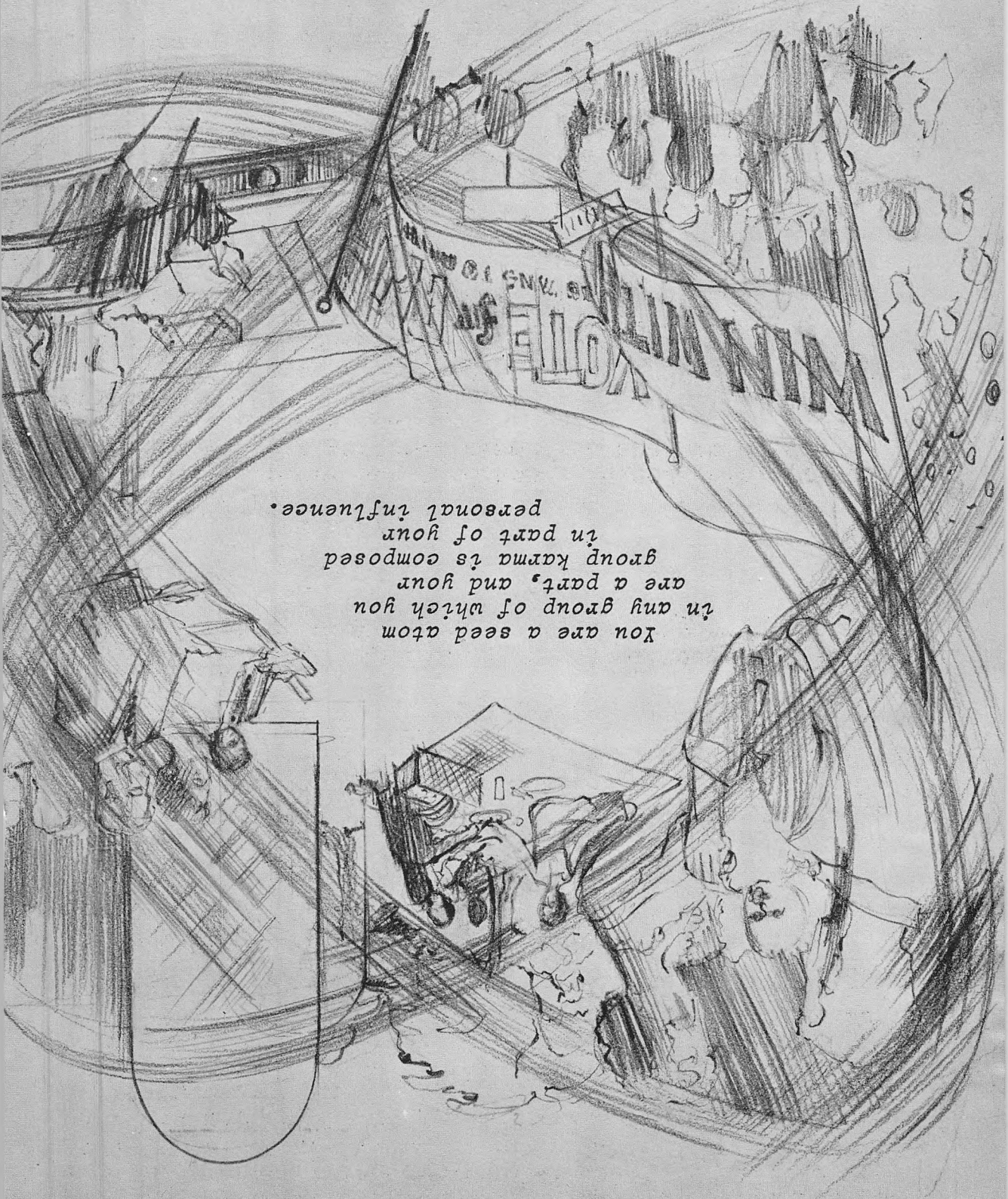
THE KARMA OF THE MANY

Just as there are seed atoms in you that register and reflect your personal karma, so are you a "seed atom" on a broader scale.

You are a seed atom in any group of which you are a part, and your group karma is composed in part of your personal influence. Some of the groups to which you contribute certain aspects of your personal karma are:

1. the family;
2. social, fraternal, religious and community groups;
3. the nation;
4. the world.

You may object that you have very little to do with larger groups such as the nation and the entire body of humankind. But I must frankly say that such an objection is merely an evasion. Perhaps you are not a head of state, for example, but your "voice" in the



sense of personal responsibility and integrity becomes part of the total "voice" nevertheless.

You may not be individually responsible for the total tragedy of an undesirable circumstance on the far side of the world, but you share in it to a degree. And you improve any situation, however remote, when you improve your Self. The weight of your influence is far greater than you realize. You are a center through which magnetic forces are constantly radiating through family, local, national and world-wide groups.

Your Self is mightier than you think!

There was once an individual who said, *I came not to destroy but to fulfill*. Such is your destiny, too, if you will but express the potentials which you possess and fulfill your Self.

KARMA ACTS ON EVERY LEVEL

In Step 2 we studied a mystical poem related to your inner potentials. Because it also pertains to the law of karma operating in your life, let's look at it again:

*Within me is the sum of all things past;
Within me are the years that yet remain;
And Heaven has not a space too high nor vast
That I may not within myself contain;
Nor is there an accomplishment divine
That is not slumbering in this soul of mine.*

The first line of the poem, *Within me is the sum of all things past*, says that what you have thought and done in the past is registered in your seed atoms and is magnetically coalescing the present circumstances of your life.

The second line, *Within me are the years that yet remain*, states that what you think and do today will constellate the circumstances of the future.

Lines three and four, *And Heaven has not a place too high nor vast that I may not within myself contain*, say that this same process is occurring on all levels of your life.

And the last two lines, *Nor is there an accomplishment divine that is not slumbering in this soul of mine*,

emphasize the fact that you have both the ability and the power to change your karma if you really wish to do so.

At the moment our interest is in lines three and four. There are levels of life, and karma operates on all of them.

Broadly speaking, the levels of life are four in number:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. Physical | 3. Mental |
| 2. Emotional | 4. Spiritual |

You live on all these levels simultaneously, emphasizing one or more of them at any one moment.

On the physical level, what you do about, or with, your physical body determines the karma of that level. What you feed your body, how you use or abuse it, what you do with it, all affect its general condition.

The same is true of the emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of your Self.

At the same time, it is obvious that none of the levels is completely separate from the others. For example, abuse of your physical body cannot be separated from emotional, mental and spiritual improprieties.

The flow of karma, in the sense of magnetic influences which create affinities and coalesce circumstances, is both outgoing and incoming. The pattern of the incoming impulses is set, and you change it only by your control of the outgoing.

Hear and understand, said Jesus. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

True, the food you eat may defile the body...but not the man. However, the results of your thoughts and acts may create adverse circumstances. By accepting the responsibilities created in the past you are not defiled, but you are defiled if you persist in creating adverse circumstances as the heritage of the future.

Remember: Karma controls the incoming.
You control the outgoing.

And the greater control you exercise on the higher levels of your life, the mental and spiritual, the bet-

ter will be your karma on the lower, the physical and emotional.

KARMA AND DESTINY

Has the god of Fate, through some peculiar whim of his own, arranged with unalterable tyranny the circumstances in which you find yourself?

If I believed it so, I would never have written this series of lessons; I would not still be studying and researching the mysteries of life; I would not attempt to improve myself; I would not believe in my identity as a worthwhile being.

Yes, I believe each person has a destiny -- the final arrival at a state in which he expresses all the potentials, human and divine, that he possesses. But I also believe that he arrives at that goal only through his own efforts, which in turn elicit a reinforcing response from the Infinite.

The final destiny has been marked for us. But intermediate destinies we gain for ourselves as steps toward the ultimate goal. The supreme destiny is Self-fulfillment. Far from ascribing my present circumstances to the "will of God," I believe that the will of God has given me the utmost freedom in learning, through experience and assimilation of knowledge and wisdom, how to fulfill all the potentials I possess.

It would be a travesty on the concept of creation to think that irrevocable destiny dictates anything for you except the final goal. You take faster or slower steps toward that goal as you improve yourself, or become satisfied with your present circumstances.

The circumstances of what may seem to be destiny are composed of many currents. But you are always free to set in motion counter currents that influence the present ones. Karma and opportunity are compatible terms. Karma and destiny are not.

A few pages ago we were faced with the puzzle of the cause for unfortunate circumstances which occur without any thought or act on your part. What is the reason for such situations?

THE THREE REASONS FOR INCARNATION

There is a teaching that every unhappy circumstance is the result of wrong thought or action and can be immediately changed. I agree they can be changed, and that every attempt to do so should be made. But I cannot hold with the idea that all these unpleasant situations are the result of wrong thought.

As I speculate upon the various troubles which I have encountered, I can very clearly see some of them as the fruit of wrong thought seeds. However, in other troublesome incidents there is radiantly to be seen a moving power and wisdom which staggers whatever I possess of imagination, intellect and ingenuity. Hindsight shows that in a most ingenious manner these difficulties have contributed in no small way to the major advances of my life.

It would debase the designs of my own inner nature, High Self, God Spark, to ascribe these situations to errors in objective thought -- or to wish that these troubles had never occurred. It would be as unreasonable as complaining that one must go to the trouble of sinking an oil well in order to obtain the precious fluid.

In Step 3 we studied the three missions in which everyone is engaged. To review very briefly, they were:

1. to express talents you have previously acquired,
2. to acquire new talents,
3. to discharge obligations previously acquired, or in other words, pay your karma.

The greatest share of this lesson is devoted to reason No. 3. But 1 and 2 offer the explanation for circumstances which you have not created by any wrong thought or act in this or any previous life.

Before incarnation you decided upon certain specific objectives, the expression of talents previously acquired and the acquisition of new talents. These objectives are known in the upper area of your consciousness, the Self, but not necessarily in the area in which your normal consciousness functions. Thus you may quickly see the possibility that the affinities resulting from the objectives expressed in your High

Self may have led you into circumstances which are not really karmic but may be considered as opportunities to express old talents, and gain new ones.

Implausible as it may momentarily seem, your Self has deliberately chosen challenges which would further these objectives. To accept them as such immediately changes one's viewpoint about them and reaction to them. It changes, or should change, what "cometh out of the mouth" from protest to purpose. It inspires renewed efforts to change a situation, to make the best of it, to meet its challenge with ingenuity and fortitude...to fulfill the Self.

The annals of American history provide a classic example in the life of Thomas Jefferson. In place of restating just another protest about the situation facing him and his fellow statesmen, he chose to state a new purpose...and the result was the historic Declaration of Independence, at the time a new concept of human worth and human rights. I believe that his High Self deliberately propelled him into the situation which cost him many of his friends, could have lost his lands and fortune and even his life, so that he might use his previously acquired talents.

We do not all function on the international scene. Once a group of people were discussing courage. Some among them had performed heroic deeds. One woman present had not done anything outstanding, yet when asked what form of courage she had practiced, answered simply, "I practice the heroism of going on."

Sometimes that is the most important kind of heroism you and I will ever be called upon to practice. It is often as heroic as the courage we laud in newspapers and on television. But we must practice "going on" in a way that will improve ourselves...not simply resignation, but with the idea of expressing and acquiring talents which fulfill the Self.

Every obstacle has its value. Though I admit it reluctantly, I realize that I create most of my own obstacles. Like most everyone, I suppose, I would like to ascribe those obstacles to outer circumstances. Yet if I analyze them carefully and impartially I must face the realization that they were created through my own shortcomings, prejudices or lack of knowledge. A few are created by my High Self. In either instance, I should view them as challenges, practice the heroism of going on, and attempt to use all my talents and acquire new ones as I face the obstacles. In this way I improve my karma and fulfill my Self.



Thomas Jefferson chose to state a new purpose...

DO YOU INHERIT KARMA?

It is a fact of human nature that we enjoy shifting to others the responsibility for our own shortcomings. The psychiatrist Freud fostered this unfortunate concept to the detriment of at least two generations.

We are influenced by others only to the extent that we ourselves allow them to influence us. Our

heritage is entirely our own. The comic strip and movie cartoon character who said, "I am what I am, and that's all I am," spoke a deep esoteric truth. Karma is not acquired, it is created.

The apparently unfortunate circumstances of some births seem to indicate the contrary. However, it cannot be said that the birth of a crippled child, for instance, is punishment for parents who have sinned. There are too many examples of genius rising from the mire of degradation to accept such as a law. And where is the justice in punishing a child for the sins of his parents?

It is much more logical to accept the fact that we come into life with what we have established in "life before life" (what we have earned in a previous incarnation or what we have deliberately created through the desire to gain new talents or express old ones).

Karma, being a working of the Law of invisible as well as visible planes, cannot always be understood or explained. But if we are to assume that Divine Justice is a fact, we must accept it as the only logical answer to puzzles we cannot yet solve.

You may be wondering why apparently the same thought or act expressed by two different persons seems to precipitate in two different karmic results. Why does one person do a certain thing which terminates in success, while another does the same thing but the result is an unfavorable circumstance?

THE PRISM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

You know, of course, that a prism -- a triangularly shaped piece of glass -- separates the various wave lengths of light. White light, entering one surface of a prism is separated into each of the colors as it leaves another of the prism's surfaces.

In the same way, the prism of man's consciousness differentiates the Divine Light. Impulses from the Infinite, or from your High Self, enter your consciousness and are then transmitted into your thoughts and acts according to the composition of your consciousness. In the prism of consciousness, some emanations from the Infinite or from the High Self are inhibited, others are emphasized. This prism of consciousness differs from person to person.

So while it seems that you and I execute the same thought or act upon impulse from the Divine, from the High Self, or from previous karmic influences, the result actually differs, and our karma would not be exactly the same, because actually we both have differentiated the impulses in a different way through the differing factors in our consciousness.

Therefore we can never say to another person that if he does the same thing we do the results will be identical. They will differ just as our fingerprints differ. Through the prism of consciousness, the One Great Light is differentiated into various personal aspects and expressions, and each of us determines the aspect and expression of karma that he creates.

We need only return to the seven basic life forces we studied in Step 6 to observe some of the differing factors which influence whatever passes through our individual prisms.

In hunger (including thirst), breath, metabolism, sex (physical creativity), consciousness (mental creativity), altruism and spiritual aspiration -- the seven basic life forces -- we differ as day and night. Actually, because of these factors, it is impossible for any two of us to think the same thought or execute the same act in exactly the same way.

All along the entire spectrum of life, even though we are from the same Source, we are individualized and so is karma. So let us refrain from judging another's karma by the measuring gauge of our own...or our own by another's.

Now, let us say that you have observed an unfavorable circumstance in your life that may be the result of karma (or for that matter may be present for any reason), and you wish to change it. What do you do?

THE THREE REQUISITES FOR IMPROVING KARMA

In the final analysis, the law of karma is a composite of several lesser laws:

the law of personal responsibility,

the law of justice,

the law of opportunity.

As the law of personal responsibility, it fulfills what modern psychologists tell us is the only hope for a humanity that is above savagery. It makes us personally responsible for our own thoughts and acts, and their results in our lives.

As the law of justice, it is the only fulfillment of the concept that all men are created equal, and the concept that as you sow, so shall you reap.

As the law of opportunity, it provides us with the challenge to improve our circumstances and our Selves, the opportunity to be changed by the renewing of our minds.

I do not believe you will wish to do as most do, simply go along haphazardly waiting for karma to improve itself. If that were your attitude you wouldn't even be reading this lesson. So how will you approach the challenge of improving your karma?

There are three simple requisites:

1. Develop a receptive mind.
2. Be willing to try.
3. Persevere.

1. Develop a receptive mind. The business and scientific worlds have discovered that the greatest hindrance to progress is a closed mind. We all occasionally suffer from this malady which has not only hindered progress but has caused more tension and pain in the world of man than any other factor.

Be receptive to impulses and ideas both from without and within. Reject impulses and concepts, if you will (sometimes it is best to do so), but only after due consideration has indicated their unworthiness or valuelessness.

2. Be willing to try. Some people simply prefer not to make the effort. They want to go to the mountaintop only if the road is easy and they need make no effort to climb.

The one who begrudges the climb seldom makes it. However formidable the obstacle may seem, see it as a challenge and tackle it.

3. Persevere. If the karmic circumstance does not seem to dissolve immediately, remember that it probably has been reinforced over a long period of time and may require longer to be overcome than you at first would like.

Practice the "heroism of going on."
Do something about it each day. Look for new opportunities to give added impetus to your efforts.

Remember, you have one special factor constantly working in your favor. As a student of the mystical and spiritual you can introduce a new dimension into all your efforts...the dimension of mental and spiritual affinities.

Most persons function only from the lower aspect of their natures. The physical, emotional and lower mental. But because you include an awareness of the higher mental and spiritual you bring a whole new dimension into your life. The true Self and its resources, the emanations from the higher planes, the impulses of the Infinite...all these are "added unto you" in a way that is most effective in improving your karma. You are not alone in the world. You are associated with a vast reservoir of assistance that will help you in every undertaking.

In these lessons you've already studied ways of bringing some of these resources into expression. But there are still others. One of them is found in the *Secret of Serenity*, the *law of rest*, which we will study in Step 8, the next step in fulfilling your Self.

